

**Our Lady on the River Parish Council Minutes  
Monday, May 18, 2009**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Fr. Jim Lopez	Matt Fett III (Pres.)	
Fr. Matt Ellis	David Schwehofer (V-Pres.)	Paul S. Ivan
Sr. Mary Ann Ankoviak, CSJ	Catherine Nutter (Sec.)	Bev Simon

**REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF DETROIT**

Lory McGlinnen, Office of Parish Life and Services

**PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS EXCUSED** Stephanie Spencer

**STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT**

Tony Antkowiak	Nick Licari	Bill Roland
Tom Cyr	Victor McDonald	John Vance
Bob Goldenbogen	Mike Rector	Bob Zweng

**STEWARDSHIP COMMISSION MEMBERS EXCUSED** Jack Randolph Richard Bober

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Sr. Geraldine Arnold	Carol Fett	Mary Patrick
Judy Beauvais	Bobbi Ivan	Celeste Salvador
Mary Endres	Pam LaBelle	

**OPENING** Fr. Jim opened the meeting in prayer at 6:40 PM.

**Presentation of Information by AOD Representative**

Lory McGlinnen distributed copies of an excerpt taken from the *Resource Manual for Parish Restructuring* that specifically pertained to merged parishes (pp. 14-20).

She indicated that our parish follows the “Model II” for a merged parish—a parish with two or more sites. She further highlighted information located on page 18, which covered these topics: “Implementation of Merger,” “Post Merger Guidelines,” and “Financial Policies & Procedures.” (This page is included at the end of these minutes.)

From these sections, Lory clarified the following points:

- Debts and assets are merged into the new Parish and Loan Deposit Program with assistance from the Financial Department.
- Parish programs, groups and chartered organizations are merged, eliminated, or replaced with new programs and organizations.
- The newly merged parish will have one Stewardship Commission...and file one AOD Budget and Financial Report for all activity.

It was the third item that brought our parish’s status to the attention of the AOD financial representatives; although our parish has an established budget (see June 2008 Parish Council Minutes), it was not submitted to the AOD on time. Because next year’s budgets are due soon, representatives from the AOD want to assist the parish in making sure this year’s budget is submitted following the established guidelines found in the restructuring manual.

The main aspect of Our Lady on the River's budget that is of concern to the AOD is the fact that, even though a unified budget for all three sites is submitted to the AOD, moneys are still dealt with separately at the local level. Lory said that this practice cannot continue.

### **Highlights of the Discussion**

1. Originally, stewardship commission members had been told that when the parishes merged, the financial records for each site would stay separate until the debt at Holy Cross was paid. At that time, the savings for the three sites would be combined, when all three sites were on equal footing.

Lory said that Holy Cross's debt is the *parish's* debt, and that, according to the AOD's guidelines, separate finances is not allowed.

Members of the stewardship commission responded unfavorably to this assertion; they verbalized that they felt as if the merger was presented under different pretenses.

2. A stewardship commission member asked if the budget could continue to be submitted in its current form: The AOD sees a single, unified report, but we keep separate records here. He asked if it were okay for the different sites to "track" their funds.

Lory said if someone wanted to "track" funds, that would be acceptable; but having separate savings accounts was not. All three sites need to share savings, expenses, and debts. She clarified, though, that if funds had been raised for a specific project or purpose previously, then the money connected with that specific project would remain "designated" and should not be used for any other expenditures.

3. Stewardship commission members raised the point that it would be difficult to balance the needs of each site with the allocation of funds, in light of the fact that not all sites contribute financially at the same level per family.

4. Stewardship commission members expressed concern that there would be negative reactions as a result of informing the rest of the parish community of these financial changes. Some believed long-time parishioners would decrease or even end their contributions.

Lory encouraged those present to take on a new mindset—think of yourselves as one parish. She said parishioners should focus on commonalities (shared religious education program, RCIA, staff, single commissions, etc.) and not on differences.

Lory said the AOD could be of assistance in helping re-define the parish community's outlook. A letter from the AOD's financial department would be sent to be read at weekend Masses explaining the changes in the parish's financial operations. Representatives from the AOD could possibly come to weekend Masses or facilitate a town hall meeting to clarify the changes. Articles could be provided for inclusion in the bulletin, offering further explanation.

To further help others see the three sites as one parish, Lory stated that the weekly offering collections should be reported in the bulletin as a single amount instead of contributions by site. Pam LaBelle mentioned that the bulletin cover would be updated this summer, reflecting a more unified parish. Lory said it should be emphasized to the parishioners that the day-to-day runnings of the parish would remain the same.

**CLOSING** Fr. Jim closed the meeting in prayer at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Catherine Nutter  
Parish Council Secretary

*Taken from: RESOURCE MANUAL FOR PARISH RESTRUCTURING, p. 18  
Published: May, 2008  
This manual is also available at [www.AODonline.org](http://www.AODonline.org) or [www.tifaodonline.org](http://www.tifaodonline.org).*

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF MERGER**

- Liturgies of closure and appropriate celebrations take place.
- A mass for the new parish is celebrated, usually presided over by the regional bishop.
- New mass schedules are implemented.
- Historic documents that are to be preserved are sent to the archives at the Archdiocesan Central Services. The guidelines for archival material should be followed.
- Sacred objects of closed churches are moved and disposed of according to archdiocesan guidelines.
- Contents of buildings that will not be used are disposed of and buildings possibly sold with the assistance of the appropriate AOD offices.
- Debts and assets are merged into the new parish Loan Deposit Program with assistance from the Finance Department.

## **POST MERGER GUIDELINES**

- The new parish staff develops a working relationship and vision as a ministry team.
- A parish pastoral council, consisting of members of all parishes is established, and new officers are selected.
- Parish goals are developed, including parishioners, leadership and staff in the process.
- Ministries and commissions are established.
- Parish programs, groups and chartered organizations are merged, eliminated, or replaced with new programs and organizations.
- During the first year, the parish continues to define itself, to heal the grief of the parishioners through spiritual renewal.
- On-going efforts to monitor and assess the emerging results, refine and revise aspects of the merger based on learning from the experience.

## **FINANCIAL POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

The business managers of the involved parishes will work with the designated staff person from the Department of Finance and Administration, Office of Parish Support Services to complete the following tasks. As of the effective date of the merger, the newly merged parish will be a new independent legal and tax entity, separate from the formerly existing parishes that were merged. As such, the newly merged parish will have one Stewardship Commission (i.e. parish Financial Council as stated in Canon 537) and file one AOD Budget and Financial Report for all activity.